



**THE PILGRIM STATUE OF  
VENERABLE MICHAEL MCGIVNEY**

*Founder of the Knights of Columbus  
Apostle to the Young and Protector of Christian Family Life*





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## Overview

*The primary objective of the Pilgrim Statue of Venerable Michael McGivney is to allow thousands of the faithful in parishes to know and get close to the “person” of Fr. McGivney. Touching his “pilgrim statue” or his relics provokes a devotional experience that may lead to deeper intercessory prayers for healing or other petitions. This may produce a vicarious experience of “meeting Fr. McGivney in person” more than just reading or hearing about him from some members of the Knights of Columbus.*

*This is also an opportunity for the members of the Order to render a catechesis on the life and ministry of the Founder of the Knights of Columbus so as to advance their spirituality and deepen their relationship with Our Lord Jesus—to whom Fr. McGivney dedicated his whole life.*

*This pilgrimage has no timeline. It will be a continuing journey as the life of a Catholic Knight is also a pilgrimage.*

*The State Deputy will start the pilgrimage at a chosen diocese within his jurisdiction. He decides how long the Pilgrim Statue will stay in this diocese but bearing in mind that it will be of utmost practicality to finish the first round of the journey (i.e., to journey to all the dioceses within his jurisdiction) while the cause of Fr. McGivney progresses at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome.*

*The conduct of the pilgrimage is simple. The current host council of the pilgrim statue will deliver it to the next host. However the manner of delivery and reception may vary from council to council so as to accommodate cultural in-*

*genuity. A solemn procession, for instance, maybe held at the arrival of the pilgrim statue to a particular city or town. A pilgrim caravan is another variation of delivery and reception, among many more.*

*At this point in time when the Cause of the Servant of God, Venerable Michael McGivney is still in process, it is more appropriate to conduct the pilgrim statue directly to the Council's chamber or meeting place upon arrival and hold the Rite of Reception of the Pilgrim Statue. However, the Rite of Reception maybe held at the Parish Church or Chapel when it is appropriate and with the expressed permission of the Bishop or the Parish Priest. (Cf. Divinus Perfectionis Magister, 1983; Sanctorum Mater, 2007)*

### **The Rite of Reception**

*(The pilgrim statue of Venerable Michael McGivney is appropriately positioned at the center of the Church, Chapel or Chamber or meeting place. It may be suitable to place flowers and candles in front of the statue. At the entry of the Statue, the choir leads an entrance song, of if no choir is available, the people present join together in song. The Chaplain presides at the Rite of Reception. If the Chaplain is not available, a member of the Order in highest rank who is present presides.)*

Chaplain: In the name of the Father...

All: Amen.

Chaplain: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you. (And with your spirit)

(Everybody is asked to be seated. The Chaplain goes to his president's chair.)

State Deputy: (The State deputy or his representative or in their absence, the District Deputy goes to the podium and introduces the pilgrim statue, linking it to the process of his canonization, then he gives a catechesis on the life and ministry of Venerable Michael McGivney. See Appendix 1 for reference)

District Deputy: (The District Deputy or the Grand Knight leads the praying of 5 decades of the Holy Rosary)

Chaplain: Proclamation of the Gospel passage Matthew 25:35-40, or the Gospel of the day. (The Chaplain may give a short exhortation on the reading and relate it to the life and virtues of Venerable Michael McGivney.)

Chaplain: (After the scriptural reflection, he leads the praying of the Prayer for the Canonization of Fr. McGivney, then gives his final blessing.)

(The Choir or those present lead the recessional song).

*If the Rite of Reception is held at the Church or Chapel, the Pilgrim Statue should be brought to the Council Chamber or meeting place at an appropriate time in a processional manner or as suitable. The Pilgrim Statue stays at the Chamber or meeting place throughout the scheduled period. At the Chamber, it should be positioned and decorated appropriately. Parishioners, friends and family of the members of the Order should be encouraged to visit the pilgrim statue and ask Fr. McGivney for intercessory prayers. When avail-*

*able, devotional items, flyers, prayer cards, posters should be made available to visitors.*

*While the Pilgrim Statue is present, regular Council Meetings may be conducted in a special way, that is, the praying of the rosary or the McGivney prayers maybe incorporated.*

*The Grand Knight or his appointed council officer shall see to it that the pilgrimage is well documented in pictures and in narrative journal from reception to departure. He furnishes a copy of the documentation to the Philippine Office of Venerable McGivney in Manila, which shall transmit a copy of the same to the Supreme Office.*

### **The Rite of Departure**

Chaplain: In the name of the Father...

All: Amen.

Chaplain: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you. (And with your spirit)

(Everybody is asked to be seated. The Chaplain goes to his presider's chair. )

State Deputy: (The State deputy or his representative or in their absence, the District Deputy goes to the podium and gives final catechesis on the life and ministry of Venerable Michael McGivney. He closes the catechesis by thanking those who have helped make the pilgrimage meaningful and enriching.)

District Deputy: (The District Deputy or the Grand Knight

leads the praying of 5 decades of the Holy Rosary)

Chaplain: Proclamation of the Gospel (The Chaplain proclaims the Gospel of the day and gives a brief reflection on the Gospel. He may also give a short catechesis on any topic he thinks most appropriate.)

Chaplain: (After the scriptural reflection, he leads the praying of the Prayer for the Canonization of Fr. McGivney, and then gives his final blessing.)

(The Choir or those present leads the recessional song).

*At an appropriate time and manner, the pilgrim statue of Venerable Michael McGivney is conducted to the next Knights of Columbus council.*

# APPENDICES

### The Cause of Venerable Michael J. McGivney

THE process of “saint making,” more properly called the process for canonization, is normally long and complex.

In 1997, Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin of Hartford, Conn., opened Fr. McGivney’s cause for canonization. Dominican Fr. Gabriel B. O’Donnell was named the postulator, or promoter, of the cause.

Over the next three years, in collaboration with the Knights of Columbus and the archdiocese, Fr. O’Donnell and others compiled the historical record of Fr. McGivney’s life and works.

Some 700 pages of documentation—called “the acts”—were presented to Archbishop Cronin in March 2000. He attested to their authenticity and entrusted them to Fr. O’Donnell. That same month, Fr. O’Donnell conveyed the acts to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints soon attested that the Church’s norms had been successfully met in this initial diocesan phase of the process toward sainthood.

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints appointed a relator, or advocate, to work with Fr. O’Donnell in the writing of the *positio*, or extended argument, for Fr.

McGivney's canonization.

The *positio* is nearly 1,000 pages in two volumes, one Fr. McGivney's biography, the other an essay on his spirituality. The volume on spirituality is organized around his life of virtue. The biography is based on text prepared for the cause by Christopher Kauffman, professor of American Church history at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and author of two books on the history of the Knights of Columbus. The *positio* was presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in January 2002.

On June 30, 2000, the diocesan phase of the investigation into a reported miraculous cure attributed to Fr. McGivney's intercession was completed. That report was also conveyed to the congregation, where it underwent strict review. One miracle is required for beatification, at which time Fr. McGivney would be declared "Blessed." Another miracle after that declaration is required for canonization or sainthood.

The important work of guiding the reported miracle through the process of approval by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints belongs to the postulator of the cause. Often, such a process requires additional information on medical terms and procedures from the locale where the reported miracle occurred.

The postulator should be present in Rome to be avail-

able to collaborate with the Congregation. In order to make this possible, the Knights of Columbus, the chief sponsor of the cause of Venerable Fr. Michael McGivney, appointed a new postulator, Dr. Andrea Ambrosi, to handle the cause. Fr. Gabriel B. O'Donnell will become the vice-postulator in the United States.

On the eve of Palm Sunday, March 15, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI approved a decree recognizing the heroic virtue of Fr. Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus. The papal declaration was a major step that significantly advances the process towards sainthood and gives Fr. Michael the distinction of being regarded as "Venerable Servant of God."

In December 2011, Brian Caulfield, a communications specialist in the executive office of the Supreme Knight, who holds a master degree in Theology was appointed as second Vice Postulator. His charge is to promote the Cause in the Philippines, where it is hoped that a miracle will come through the intercession of Fr. McGivney.

### **Father McGivney and the Philippines**

What does a priest named McGivney, who lived and died more than a century ago in Connecticut, USA, have to do with the Philippines today? Why bring the Cause of Father Michael J. McGivney to the shores of our country now?

The simple answer is that holiness is not confined to one time or place; it is a gift from God that transcends geographic, cultural and language barriers. Therefore, the connection between Father McGivney and the Philippines is the Catholic faith, which is the same in its essentials everywhere, though showing different expressions and customs from place to place.

Yet there are a few more specific connections between Father McGivney and the Philippines that were outlined by Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson during his recent visit to Manila for the 9th Knights of Columbus National Convention. He explained three simple Philippine-McGivney Connections that should make the founder familiar to all Filipinos:

**1. Father McGivney is Protector of Christian Family Life.** The Philippines has a great culture of family life that is becoming more rare in our modern world. It is not unusual for three generations to be closely connected,

even living under the same roof. We still value and honor new life, which is seen as a blessing from God, not a burden. Yet the great tradition of the Filipino family is threatened by such measures as the RH Bill. So we can look to Father McGivney as a protector in our efforts to preserve family life in our Catholic nation.

**2. Father McGivney is Apostle to the Young.** An apostle is “one who is sent” by God. Father McGivney had a special charism to engage young people and keep them close to the Church. The Philippines is a land of youthful energy and dreams, but these need to be guided by faith and virtue. Father McGivney is the perfect intercessor for the next generation, and parents can safely place their children under his guidance.

**3. Father McGivney was a humble Parish Priest.** By honoring Father McGivney, we are honoring the hard work and devotion of all parish priests. Not a missionary or a martyr, his holiness, humility and heroic virtue were lived out in the parish. Priests in the Philippines can look to Father McGivney as a model, and the Filipino people can pray that he watch over their priests.

Venerable Michael McGivney, Protector of Christian Family Life, Apostle to the Young and Model of Parish Priests – Pray for the Philippines as her people get to know and love you better!

## **His Priestly Ministry**

### ***Servant of Charity***

To habitually anticipate the needs of others is a sign of true Christian charity. To spend one's life alleviating the sufferings of others and bringing joy to one's neighbor brings witness to the reality of Christ's love in one's mind and heart. This is the pattern of service and ministry we discover in Fr. McGivney as we plot the events of his daily life.

Fr. McGivney seems never to have failed in his interest and concern for others, even at the expense of his own health and well-being. We can only rejoice in the example he provides: united to Christ in the Mass, prayer and sacrifice yet never removed from the realities of life that so preoccupied the members of his flock.

There was in Fr. McGivney a balance between the human and divine. His ability to mourn with those in sorrow and rejoice with those in need of joy and encouragement typified his priestly disposition. Every one of us, cleric or lay, married or single, needs to achieve such a balance, an integration, in our own lives.

God hears our prayers for help, and he listens to the powerful intercession of his friends, the saints. Let us

learn to invoke the intercession of this holy, humble and very human parish priest for our conversion and growth in the spiritual life.

### ***Confessor of Souls***

Fr. McGivney always put his priestly work of celebrating the Mass and the sacraments, of ministering directly to his people, before everything else. His abundant charity flowed from his daily Mass, his personal prayer and frequent confession.

Fr. McGivney's priestly mission was primarily spiritual. Even his works of charity, particularly his monumental task of establishing the Knights of Columbus, had as their source and goal a life of eternal communion with God. Concern for the widow and orphan, and for the moral well-being of young Catholics, was not simply an expression of Fr. McGivney's desire to build a better world (though build mightily he did). His primary concern was to prepare his people for heaven.

### ***Apostle to the Young***

There was in Fr. McGivney some spark, some magnetism, that drew the young people to him. He was at ease with little children and lost some of his natural reserve and formality with them. But it was to the young adults of his day that he was given a particular mission. Fr. McGivney was bonded to the young men and women

of his flock in a mutual admiration and respect that endured even after his death in 1890. He was relatively young himself, only 25, when he began his first priestly assignment at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn., and so he understood their aspirations as well as their struggles and temptations.

“Apostle” means “one who is sent.” Fr. McGivney was sent by God to the young people of his time to lead them along a secure path to Christian adulthood. Today, in an age experiencing the growing despair and violence of teenagers and young adults, it is imperative that we look to models such as Fr. McGivney to learn the art of drawing the youth of our society to a life of moral excellence and the nobility of Christian service of God and neighbor. No stranger to adversity, Fr. McGivney is an apostle to those who, in our own era, struggle to find meaning and purpose in life. He is a heavenly patron for young men and women of the third millennium.

### ***Protector of Christian Family Life***

Sent to serve the young of his flock, Fr. McGivney in turn “sent” the young men under his influence and direction into the world to become good husbands and Fr.s, true knights for God and country.

His work with the young was but a steppingstone to the formation of strong Catholic families. His dedication to

the ideal of Christian manhood expressed so clearly in the founding of the Knights of Columbus was never allowed to obscure his ultimate goal of protecting the good of the entire family unit.

In a sense, the founding of the Knights of Columbus was a means rather than an end: a means to strengthen husbands and Fr.s so that they could, in turn, strengthen their families in the faith and secure their material well-being.

A fragment of a sermon Fr. McGivney gave in 1884 was recorded in the *New Haven Observer*. It showed that he also regarded politics as a means to build a better society.

“My friends,” Fr. McGivney told his parishioners, “the political campaign is rapidly drawing to a close and the time has come to decide which of the numerous presidential candidates shall receive your vote. In casting your ballots you should look well to the responsibilities under which every citizen of this free government is placed. Let not the soft or alluring words of tricky politicians, or the seductive dollar turn you a hair’s breadth from your lawful path. Vote not as other men dictate, but rather like men with the interest of your country at heart. Vote according to the dictates of your own consciences.”

### ***Man of Pastoral Action***

Attentive to a family's hopes and aspirations for education or job security, Fr. McGivney listened as well to stories of disappointment and betrayal in love.

He encouraged those burdened with fear and guilt. Just 10 months after his ordination, Fr. McGivney expressed the toll of such a heavy workload in a letter to a former seminary professor: "I have not had time for even one day's vacation since I left St. Mary's [Seminary] and was obliged to be at my post alone while Fr. Murphy was away. So pardon me the delay."

His spirituality flowed from his priestly identity and the primary work of bringing Christ to his people in the sacraments. His example of being ever ready to listen, advise and console stirred the idealism and generosity of his young friends to imitate his virtue in their own lives and in their proper vocation.

The uniqueness of Fr. McGivney's spirituality of pastoral action lies less in its piety, which was typical of the age and religious climate, and more in the fact that he fostered collaboration between the priest and the layman in addressing the serious issues Catholics faced in the second half of the 19th century. The spirit of cooperation and a certain sense of equality must be considered a unique aspect of Fr. McGivney's spirituality.

While always considered a man of exemplary virtue,

Fr. McGivney was still always approachable. He was loved by his people, particularly his young charges whose souls he so carefully nurtured and formed. No less in death than in life is Fr. McGivney an apostle to the young and the protector of Christian family life.

Add to the mix his other activities such as visiting the sick, instructing the children in catechism and the herculean task of founding the Knights of Columbus and one can well understand why he had little stamina to fight off the illness which finally carried him off from this world.

He was a hardworking pastor of souls.

### **The Life and Times of Venerable Michael McGivney**

#### ***Early Years***

Fr. Michael McGivney was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, on August 12, 1852. His parents, Patrick and Mary (Lynch) McGivney, had arrived in the great 19th century wave of Irish immigration. Patrick McGivney became a molder in the heat and noxious fumes of a Waterbury brass mill. Mary McGivney gave birth to 13 children, six of whom died in infancy or childhood. So the first child, Michael, with four living sisters and two brothers, learned early about sorrow and the harsh grip of poverty. He also learned about the powers of love and faith, and family fortitude.

He went to the small district schools of Waterbury's working-class neighborhoods. A good child, he was admired by his school principal for "excellent deportment and proficiency in his studies." Then, after the Civil War, when Connecticut's metals industry was booming, he left school at age 13 to go to work. His job in the spoon-making department of a brass factory provided a few more dollars for family survival.

When Michael reached the age of 16 in 1868, he left the factory. With the priesthood clearly in mind, he

traveled with his Waterbury pastor to Quebec, Canada. There he registered at the French-run College of St. Hyacinthe. He worked hard on subjects which would prepare him to apply for seminary admission.

Two academic years followed at Our Lady of Angels Seminary in Niagara Falls, New York. Young McGivney moved next to Montreal to attend seminary classes at the Jesuit-run St. Mary's College.

He was there when his father died in June of 1873.

### ***Priesthood***

Lacking funds and concerned about his family, he went home for the funeral, lingering awhile in Waterbury. Then, at the request of the bishop of Hartford, he entered St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland. After four years of study, on December 22, 1877, he was ordained in Baltimore's historic Cathedral of the Assumption by Archbishop (later Cardinal) James Gibbons. A few days later, with his widowed mother present, he offered his first Mass at Immaculate Conception Church in Waterbury.

Fr. McGivney began his priestly ministry on Christmas Day in 1877 as curate at St. Mary's Church in New Haven. It was the city's first parish. A new stone church had been built, after the old one burned, on one of New Haven's finest residential streets, Hillhouse Avenue.

One of the responsibilities of St. Mary's priests was pastoral care of inmates of the city jail. In a notable case, a 21-year-old Irishman, while drunk, shot and killed a police officer. James (Chip) Smith was tried for first-degree murder in 1881, convicted and sentenced to be hanged. Fr. McGivney visited him daily.

After a special Mass on the day of execution, the priest's grief was intense. The young offender comforted him: "Fr., your saintly ministrations have enabled me to meet death without a tremor. Do not fear for me, I must not break down now."

Fr. McGivney worked closely with the young people of St. Mary's parish, holding catechism classes and organizing a total abstinence society to fight alcoholism. In 1881 he began to explore with various laymen the idea of a Catholic, fraternal benefit society. In an era when parish clubs and fraternal societies had wide popular appeal, the young priest felt there should be some way to strengthen religious faith and at the same time provide for the financial needs of families overwhelmed by illness or death of the breadwinner. He also strove greatly to dissuade Catholic men from joining secret societies that were hostile to the Church and her mission.

## ***Founder***

People who knew Fr. McGivney in this period were im-

pressed by his energy and intensity. Fr. Gordian Daley later recalled, “I saw him but once, and yet I remember this pale, beautiful face as if I saw it only yesterday. It was a ‘priest’s face’ and that explains everything. It was a face of wonderful repose. There was nothing harsh in that countenance although there was everything that was strong.”

William Geary, one of the Order’s charter members, said that at the first council meeting in 1882, he was “acclaimed as founder by 24 men with hearts full of joy and thanksgiving, recognizing that without his optimism, his will to succeed, his counsel and advice they would have failed.”

Fr. McGivney had suggested Sons of Columbus as a name for the Order. This would bind Catholicism and Americanism together through the faith and bold vision of the New World’s discoverer.

The word “knights” replaced “sons” because key members of the organizing group who were Irish-born Civil War veterans felt it would help to apply a noble ritual in support of the emerging cause of Catholic civil liberty. In the first public reference to the Order on February 8, 1882, the *New Haven Morning Journal and Courier* said the Knights of Columbus’ initial meeting had been held the night before.

On March 29, the Connecticut legislature granted a

charter to the Knights of Columbus, formally establishing it as a legal corporation. The Order's principles in 1882 were "Unity" and "Charity." The concepts of "Fraternity" and "Patriotism" were added later. Each of these ideals played a major role in ceremonies from the beginning. The Columbus-linked themes, says historian Christopher J. Kauffman, "reverberated with pride in the American promise of liberty, equality and opportunity."

### ***Devotion***

In April 1882, Fr. McGivney, with the permission of Bishop McMahon, wrote to all the pastors of the Diocese of Hartford. He urged each pastor to exert influence "in the formation of a Council in your parish." Fr. McGivney personally installed the first officers of San Salvador Council 1 in New Haven, in May 1882.

Fr. McGivney's dedication to the Order was evidenced in trips he made to all parts of Connecticut and in handwritten correspondence—little of which survives—about K of C business. At St. Mary's, despite all this, he remained the energetic curate with constant concern for every parishioner's problems.

Then in November 1884, he was named pastor of St. Thomas Church in Thomaston, Conn., a factory town 10 miles from his hometown. It was a factory parish, heavily in debt, serving working-class parishioners

with few resources beyond their faith. With prayerful acceptance, Fr. McGivney put his seven years at St. Mary's behind him.

His New Haven parishioners, in a testimonial resolution elaborately superimposed on the drawing of a chalice and host, declared that despite burdens and afflictions, his courtesy, his kindness and the purity of his life had "secured the love and confidence of the people of St. Mary's, which will follow him in every future field of labor."

## ***Death***

Never robust in health, Fr. McGivney was suddenly stricken with a serious case of pneumonia in January 1890. It hung on. Various treatments for consumptive illness were tried, but his decline persisted. The young priest lost physical strength just as the Order he founded was moving toward new vitality.

On August 14, 1890, Fr. Michael J. McGivney died at the age of 38. In his 13 brief, busy years as a priest, Fr. McGivney's piety and compassion had won the love of those he served as curate and pastor. His Christian inspiration, leadership and administrative drive had brought him the loyalty and affection of thousands who knew him as the founder of the Knights of Columbus.

At the first memorial service for deceased Knights held

later in the year he died, this tribute was accorded him: "He was a man of the people. He was zealous of the people's welfare, and all the kindness of his priestly soul asserted itself more strongly in his unceasing efforts for the betterment of their condition . . . Oh, Reverend Founder. . . that act alone which gave life to the Knights of Columbus has surely secured for thee everlasting joy and eternal peace."

### **The Legacy of Venerable Michael J. McGivney**

From the moment he launched the Knights of Columbus, the organization fortified Catholics in their faith, offered them ways to greater financial security in a sometimes hostile world, and strengthened their confidence.

Remarkably developed from its simple beginnings in a church basement, the Knights of Columbus today combines Catholic fraternalism and one of the most successful American insurance enterprises. The four towers of the international headquarters symbolize the Order's worldwide commitment to charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. More than 13,000 fraternal councils are active in 13 countries.

More than 1.8 million Knights contribute about \$155 million and 70 million hours of volunteer service to charitable causes each year.

At St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Fr. McGivney's polished granite sarcophagus, sheltered inside a totally restored church, now has become a shrine for pilgrim Knights where the Order began.

Founding the Knights of Columbus was an expression of Fr. McGivney's vocation as an alter Christus, another Christ. He wanted to help Catholic men draw closer to Jesus and Mary. His fraternal order was to be

an instrument for spiritual growth in Christian faith and charity. And so it remains.

### ***Chronology of Fr. McGivney***

1852 - Born

1865-68 - Factory Worker

1868-69 - School in Quebec

1871-72 - Studies Philosophy

1873 - Enters Seminary

1877 - Ordained, First Mass, St. Mary's Church

1882 - Knights of Columbus

1884 - Pastor

1888 - Mother Dies

1890 - Death

1982 - Reinterred

1996 - Postulator Named

1997 - Cause for Sainthood

2000 - Vatican Review

2002 - Statement on Virtue

2003 - Healing Reported

2004 - Possible Miracle

2008 - Declared Venerable

### **Front Cover**

This painting of Fr. Michael McGivney was commissioned by the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council and created by contemporary Italian artist Antonella Cappuccio. It depicts Fr. McGivney in the rectory of St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Connecticut, awaiting the arrival of Catholic immigrants to America, for whom he would found the Knights of Columbus to provide faith formation and financial security.

### **Back Cover**

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Patroness of the Americas and the Philippines. In the year 2000, Carl A. Anderson offered his service as Supreme Knight to the protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe.





*“In fact, in a unique way, the full radicalness of Our Lady of Guadalupe’s apparition can only be understood fully now, when Catholicism’s most expressed model for society is a Civilization of Love and its greatest explication human dignity is the Theology of the Body.”*